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Polish Pioneer Communities in the Pacific Northwest

A Forgotten Chapter of Polish Diaspora[1]

The article explores four pioneer Polish American communities in Washington State: Pe Ell, Wilkeson, Aberdeen and Enumclaw. These small towns thrived on timber industry (Pe Ell, Aberdeen), coal mining (Wilkeson) and farming (Enumclaw). In each location, Poles established a lodge of the Polish National Alliance, and in three of these communities, they successfully opened a Polish Hall. In addition, they contributed to founding a Roman Catholic church in each town and successfully advocated for a Polish-speaking pastorate. In Pe Ell, they also established and maintain the Holy Cross parish of the schismatic Polish National Catholic Church for many decades (1916-1970). By presenting this information, the article aims to shed light on a lesser-known aspect of Polish diaspora history in the United States.

Keywords: US immigration, immigrant community building, ethnic agency, Pacific Northwest

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1. Introduction

In 2018, about 131,000 Washington State residents identified as having Polish ancestry, fully or partially (*Statistical Atlas*). This group, small but very dynamic, has its center in the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan area (Praszałowicz). This article aims to shed some light not on this central hub, but on smaller Polish American communities in the Pacific Northwest.[2] Four towns were selected as interesting for a comparative study. Two of them, Pe Ell and Wilkeson, are very small, while the other two, Aberdeen and Enumclaw, are somewhat larger. All four are located in Washington State: Pe Ell (Lewis County) and Aberdeen (Grays Harbor County) are in the western part of the state, near the Pacific Coast, while Wilkeson (Pierce County) and Enumclaw (King County) lie in the western foothills of the Cascade Mountains (Map 1).

Though the Polish populations in these towns were modest, they successfully established ethnic communities that have gone largely unrecognized by researchers of the Polish diaspora. Furthermore, the brief histories of these towns often overlooked the Polish contributions to their development. From the perspective of diaspora studies and the broader Polish experience in the U.S., it seems important to address this gap by providing information on the immigrants' agency and strategies in these places and tracking the cultural changes (Americanization) and social practices within their local communities (Schatzki). This study takes place against the backdrop of a "landscape of continuous cultural transitions and uninterrupted social relationships" among local immigrant groups (Wimmer 13).

Rather than focusing on "the daily negotiation of ethnic difference" (immigrant group vs. the mainstream; Poles vs. other ethnic groups) this study examines "local liveability, that is, the micropolitics of everyday social contact and encounter" (Amin 959). This raises the question about immigrant community-building on the one hand (creating bonding social capital) and the reconciliation and overcoming of ethnic cultural differences on the other (creating bridging social capital) (Putnam). Moreover, we address here the system of ethnic classification (Wimmer 7). The issues of local ethnic and racial hierarchy are discussed in the following chapter.

The research is based on a review of literature, critical analysis of local histories, reports, local newspapers, records of immigrant associations and churches, personal documents, interviews, and oral histories. Although the available materials are fragmentary, their analysis provides a solid foundation for the search of further sources. In other words, the study aims to rekindle interest in these forgotten local immigrant communities and show how we can and should interpret past experiences using the latest conceptual frameworks.

[2] The states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho are collectively known as the Pacific Northwest. This text focuses specifically on Washington State. In the studies of its history, the name of the entire region is often used. Moreover, the inhabitants proudly identify with the Pacific Northwest. "The fact is that Pacific Northwesterners themselves cannot agree upon their region's boundaries. In addition to the generally accepted core states of Washington and Oregon, some people would include western Montana and even northern California and British Columbia within the region. Idaho presents the greatest challenge to easy classification (…)" (Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes. *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, p. 2).

2. Settlement in the Region and Local Ethnic Groups

Poles reached the Pacific Northwest via three primary migration routes. The process began in the 1870s and continued until World War I. The first migration route led from the Midwest, likely spurred by aggressive recruitment efforts targeting settlers for the region. Railroad companies, coal mines, and local governments advertised their region in the Midwest. They published articles in ethnic newspapers and distributed brochures that depicted the Pacific Northwest as a land of opportunity. Many Poles who lived and worked in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and other Midwestern states decided to take a chance and seek their fortunes in these newly opened settlement areas along the Pacific coast.[3]

The second route led from Pennsylvania, where Poles were employed in the mines and sought to use their skills in a place with better working conditions.[4] In Washington State, many Poles found employment in coal mining in Wilkeson, Franklin and Roslyn.

The third route was driven by chain migration mechanisms and brought newcomers who arrived at Ellis Island directly to the Pacific Northwest. Simply put, migrants were in contact with their relatives who had settled in the region earlier and followed them to join their communities. When asked at Ellis Island, they declared Pe Ell, WA, Wilkeson, WA or another specific place as their destination in the US (Kowalski 2007 and 2008). Chronologically, this pattern was the latest.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "In Washington there were four main areas of [Polish – DP] settlement (…). The first area was Seattle-Tacoma. (…) The second area was Southwest Washington: Aberdeen, Raymond, Pe Ell, and other nearby communities. (…) The third area was the Enumclaw Plateau, on the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains. (…) The fourth area was Cle Elum, Roslyn, and nearby communities, on the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains" (Hicker). The first area radiated outward to all other locations, and it is easy to identify strong links between Polish activity in Tacoma and the four towns studied. Pe Ell and Aberdeen belong to the second area, while Wilkeson and Enumclaw are part of the third. As this overview shows, there were many more places with significant Polish communities, such as Cle Elum and Roslyn, east of the Cascades. Other places with large numbers of Polish Americans include Belingham (near the Canadian border), where nearly 4,300 residents declared Polish ancestry in 2014; Vancouver, WA, with more than 2,800; Yakima, with nearly 1,700; Olympia, with nearly 1,400; and Lacey, with more than 1,000 (*Statistical Atlas*). Additional smaller places with Polish roots include Black Diamond

[3] Sigvald Stenersen, born in Idaho to a family of Norwegian immigrants, reports that in the 1930s, he worked in the lumber industry in Idaho with people who had come from Toledo and Cincinnati. "Most of them from Toledo were Polish." (Sigvald Stenersen. "My First Christmas, I Hauled Manure on Christmas Day." *New Land, New Lives: Scandinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest*, edited by Janet E. Rasmussen, Seattle–London: University of Washington Press, 1993, p. 155).

[4] This route was mentioned in the history of Marchelewicz/Miller family and their friends Snorski/Skorupski. Records documenting this history are stored at the archives of the Washington State Historical Society in Tacoma. Similar stories of migration from Pennsylvania to the Pacific Northwest are recounted in many testimonies of early settlers.

and Franklin near Wilkeson, Raymond located between Aberdeen and Pe Ell, and Hoquium and Wallville, adjacent to Aberdeen. Of these towns, Franklin (coal mining) and Wallville (lumber industry) no longer exist, as the local economies collapsed.

During the interwar period, immigration restrictions limited the influx of immigrants, particularly those from Southern and Eastern Europe. Many Poles migrated within the United States, and some eventually settled in the Pacific Northwest.[5] World War II brought a wave of refugees from Europe, including Poles. In subsequent decades, they were joined by economic migrants and political refugees from communist states. Many of these migrants settled in Washington State, primarily in its major urban centers, such as Seattle and Tacoma. Small towns did not attract as much attention. Therefore, when studying Polish American communities in Pe Ell, Wilkeson, Aberdeen, and Enumclaw, we are dealing with third- and fourth--generation immigrants. Due to the collapse of local economies, many descendants of Polish immigrants have since moved away, especially from Pe Ell and Wilkeson. This makes it all the more important to revisit the Polish contributions to these communities' histories and to identify and preserve local sources.

Regarding the ethnic context of the Polish American experience in the region, it somewhat differed from that in the largest Polish diaspora centers in the US. In addition to the most numerous immigrant groups in the US, such as Germans, Irish, and Italians, Scandinavians were also prominent in the Pacific Northwest (Table 1). According to the Seattle Nordic Museum, by 1900, almost 25% of foreign-born residents in the state of Washington were of Danish, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, or Icelandic heritage.[6] In the entire US society, immigrants form Scandinavian countries constituted 10.4% of the foreign-born population in 1900, which means that the Scandinavian group was overrepresented in the Pacific Northwest. Its members distinguished themselves by establishing a maritime economy that was part of the traditions brought from their homelands. Similar patterns can be observed among Croats, and Greeks, who were less numerous but visible in the region.[7] It seems that interactions with Scandinavians and Croats played a role in shaping the social practices of Polish newcomers.

The "old immigrants"[8] – the Irish, Germans, and Nordic groups – were directly recruited to relocate and settle in the Pacific Northwest. In the 1880s, agents distributed

[5] Sigvald Stenersen, born in Idaho to a family of Norwegian immigrants, recalled that in the 1930s he worked in the timber industry in Idaho with people who came from Toledo and Cincinnati. "Most of them from Toledo were Polish." (Sigvald Stenersen. "My First Christmas, I Hauled Manure on Christmas Day." *New Land, New Lives: Scandinavian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest*, edited by Janet E. Rasmussen, Seattle–London: University of Washington Press, 1993, p. 155).

[6] Since the Finnish group is not part of the Scandinavian population, the term "Nordic group" is used in the Pacific Northwest to include Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, and Icelanders. This term has gained popularity due to the influence of the Nordic Museum, which has been successfully operating in Seattle since 1979.

[7] Although Italians were more numerous in the region than Greeks and Croats, they were less involved in the maritime economy. However, some of them, particularly those of Neapolitan, Sicilian, and Genoese descent, did work as fishermen. Italian fishermen lived in Aberdeen, WA., among other locations (Nicardi 63).

[8] For a discussion and critique of the distinction between "old" and "new immigrants" and its racial dimension, see Higham; Kraut; Kamphoefner.

brochures in their respective countries, promoting the region: "On the Continent, 124 general agents were appointed in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, and Germany, and supplied with publications, which they distributed through sub-agencies in towns and villages within their respective districts (…)." [9]

Table 1.
Origin of the Washington state population 2018 & 1920

Ancestry	2018 Declared ancestry		1920 country of birth of the foreign born white
	number	%	
German*	1,260,000	17.8	22,315
Irish	765,000	10.8	8,927
English	733,000	10.4	20,806
Norwegian	380,000	5.4	30,304
American	329,000	4.6	
Italian	247,000	3.5	10,813
Swedish	227,000	3.2	34,793
French	219,000	3.1	2,452
Scottish	204,000	2.9	7,886
European	174,000	2.5	
Dutch	145,000	2.0	3,097
Polish	131,000	1.9	3,906
Other	2,310,000	32.7	6,152
total population of Washington state	7,073,000		1,356,621

* In 1920, Germany was a country of birth of German, German-Jewish, and non-German immigrants (Czechs, Poles, Danes, Alsatians, etc.)
Sources: https://statisticalatlas.com/county/Washington/King-County/Ancestry, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-3/41084484v3ch09.pdf.

There is no evidence of such activity in Southern and Eastern Europe, the two regions that began to experience transatlantic migration fever in the 1880s. However, the so-called "new immigrants" – Italians, Poles, Greeks, and Croats – streamed into the Pacific Northwest and were welcomed as labor. In the local hierarchy, as in the rest of the country, they occupied the position of unskilled labor, slightly above the local racial minorities – Chinese and Japanese.[10] However, it appears that the rela-

[9] [In 1882 – DP] "632,590 copies of Northern Pacific publications, including cards, maps, posters, etc., printed in the various European languages, were distributed from the general agency." (Hedges 198-199).

[10] The Black minority in the region was less numerous. The first African Americans were brought to the area as strikebreakers and were treated as competitors (cheap labor) in the labor market, facing discrimination similar to that experienced by Asians. Hispanics arrived

tionship between the privileged "old immigrants" and the less prestigious "new immigrants" was closer in the Pacific Northwest than in the Midwest or the East Coast. For example, Poles adopted Scandinavian practices for establishing halls (centers of ethnic activity) and closely cooperated with Germans within the Roman Catholic Church.

Table 2.
Race and ethnicity of the Washington State population 2020 and 1920

	2020		1910	
	Washington State %	**USA** %	**Washington State** %	**USA** %
White	76.8	75.5	97.3	88.4
Hispanic	14.0	19.1	No data	No data
Black	4.6	13.6	0.5	10.9
Asian	10.5	6.3	Chinese 0.2 Japanese 1.3	Chinese 0.1 Japanese 0.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	2.0	1.3	0.7	0.3
Two or More Races	5.3	3.0	No data	No data
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	65.1	58.9	No data	No data
Foreign born white	2022 foreign born 14.8	2022 foreign born 13.9	18.4	14.3
Native white foreign parentage			15.8	13.9
Native white mixed parentage			10.6	6.4
Population estimates	7,784,477 (2022)	334,914,895 (2023)	1,356,621	93,402,15

Sources: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/WA/PST045222, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045223, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/volume-1/volume-1-p4.pdf, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-3/41084484v3ch09.pdf, https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/foreign-born-population-2018-2022.html.

As for the racial composition of the local population, Washington State is predominantly white, with a much lower percentage of African Americans and Hispanics

later; in 1930, according to the US Census, there were only 562 Mexicans in Washington State, though many Mexicans were undocumented and thus not counted. In general, Hispanics were employed in agriculture and did not appear to compete with Poles in the region (Slone).

and a higher percentage of Asians (Table 2). However, the situation in the four surveyed towns is somewhat different. In 2022, the white population ranged from 92% in Wilkeson, 81% in Pe Ell, 78.5% in Enumclaw, to 69% in Aberdeen. Asians and African Americans are scarcely represented in these four towns, while the Hispanic population accounts for 5% of Wilkeson residents, 10.5% in Enumclaw, 11% in Pe Ell, and 21.4% in Aberdeen (*Washington Demographics*).

3. Pe Ell, Wilkeson, Enumclaw, Aberdeen

Map 1.
Map of the state of Washington with the surveyed places marked

Aberdeen
Pe Ell
Enumclaw
Wilkeson

Source: https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/USA/washington_map.htm.

Pe Ell, incorporated as a town in 1906, currently has a population of 695 (2024) (World Population Review). From its early years, the local economy was based on the lumber industry, which sustained the town for many decades. According to a popular study, "Beginning in the 1850s, many families settled in the Pe Ell region. A substantial number of the new settlers were immigrants from Poland, Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Switzerland, and other countries" (Holden Givens). "Polish-born John Kotula (1854-1943) arrived in Pe Ell in 1889 (…). He built a home with six rooms and three porches on the ground floor, a large barn, and many outbuildings"(Holden Givens). Local history provides evidence of cooperation between Poles and their German (including Austrian) and Swiss neighbors.

Wilkeson, incorporated in 1909, currently has a population of about 468 (2024) (World Population Review). The town's development began in the 1880s, driven by coal mining and the timber industry. Today, the local economy is based on sandstone mining. In 1910, the town's population peaked at 899 people, and it was estimated that nearly twice as many lived in the surrounding area (Alter, Population US. The history of the local Catholic Church highlights the settlement of a Slavic population in the 1880s (*Brief History of Our Lady…*). Some of the newcomers had previously worked in coal mines in Pennsylvania.[11] "Some 400 worked in the mines [in Wilkeson], with roughly half having immigrated from countries including England, Wales, Scotland, Finland, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Germany, France, Poland, Croatia, Hungary, and Russia" (Norberg).

The populations of both towns began to decline due to the collapse of the local economy; coal mining in Wilkeson became unprofitable in the 1920s, and the lumber industry in Pe Ell started to shrink in the 1940s (Table 3).[12] However, in recent decades, the population in both towns has grown; in Wilkson the process began in the 1980s, and in Pe Ell in the 1990s.

Table 3.
Population of Wilkeson and Pe Ell, WA, 1880-2020

Year	Wilkeson	Pe Ell
1880	104	
1890	400	
1900	675	
1910	899	838
1920	803	861
1930	448	891
1940	369	825

[11] The information is based on Steward Miller's family history and records of the first settlers.

[12] "1911 - At that time took place the first great coal strike of this district which was the beginning of the decline of the towns of Wilkeson, Fairfax, Carbonado and Melmont. (The second strike in 1918 nearly depopulated these towns. Wilkeson, which once boasted a population of 5,000, today numbers about 425)" (*Brief History of Our Lady…*).

Year	Wilkeson	Pe Ell
1950	386	787
1960	412	593
1970	317	582
1980	316	617
1990	366	547
2000	406	657
2010	477	632
2020	499	642

Sources: https://population.us/wa/wilkeson/, https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/pe-ell-washington, https://population.us/wa/pe-ell/, https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/pe-ell-washington, US Decennial Census, 2020 Census.

Table 4.
Top Ancestry Groups in Pe Ell & Wilkeson 2010

	Pe Ell		Wilkeson	
	number	%	**number**	%
Town population	596	100	425	100
German	107	18.3	135	31.8
Irish	105	17.9	40	9.4
American	24	4.1	14	3.3
Norwegian	17	2.9	42	9.9
Swedish	15	2.6	17	4.0
Croatian	No data			
Canadian	No data		21**	5.0
Italian	13	2.2	42	9.9
Polish	41	7.0	No data	
Scottish	20	3.4	29	6,8
Swiss	31	5.3		
Dutch	10	1.7	19	4.5

Sources: https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Pe-Ell/Ancestry, https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Wilkeson/Ancestry.

As already mentioned, Aberdeen and Enumclaw are larger compared to Pe Ell and Wilkeson. Aberdeen, incorporated in 1890, currently has a population 17,637 (2024) (World Population Review). "Lumber, fisheries, and shipbuilding have

fueled the local economy for much of the region's history. More recently extractive industries have declined and tourism and commercial retail have increased (…)" (Ott). "White Americans began to come into the region in the 1840s (…)". By the turn of the 19th century, Aberdeen had a diverse population. "Many of the sailors, loggers, millworkers, and farmers who lived in Aberdeen hailed from foreign countries in Europe and Asia" (…)" (Ott). Local reports noted an influx of immigrants and voiced concerns about the companies that brought Italian and Greek workers considered cheap labor (Washington State. Bureau of Labor 170).

Table 5.
Aberdeen & Enumclaw, WA Population

Year	Population Aberdeen	Population Enumclaw
1880		
1890	1,638	
1900	3,747	483
1910	13,660	1,129
1920	15,337	1,378
1930	21,723	2,084
1940	18,846	2,627
1950	19,653	2,789
1960	18,741	3,269
1970	18,489	4,703
1980	18,739	5,427
1990	16,581	7,217
2000	16,511	11,121
2010	16,896	10,669
2020	17,000	12,600

Sources: https://population.us/wa/aberdeen/, https://population.us/wa/enumclaw/, https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/aberdeen-wa-population,https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/enumclaw-wa-population.

Enumclaw was incorporated in 1913, and currently has a population of 13,035 (2024). The city "came into existence in 1885. (…) The plateau developed as a farming area. (…) Enumclaw first appears in U.S. Census figures in 1900, with a population of 483, including immigrants from Scandinavia, Slovenia, Italy, France, and Germany. (…) in 1910, the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad routed a branch line through town, establishing Enumclaw as the major distribution and supply center for area agricultural cooperatives and mining and lumber operations"(Andrews). By the 1940s, dairy and timber were the primary industries. Enumclaw stands out among the four towns with continuous population

growth, likely to its diversified economy, focusing on agriculture, food trade and manufacturing.

Table 6.
Top Ancestry Groups Aberdeen & Enumclaw 2010

	Aberdeen		Enumclaw	
	number	%	**number**	%
Town population	16,335	100	11,543	100
German	2,229	14.1	2,829	24.5
Irish	1,989	12.2	1,367	11.8
American	1,158	7.1	758	6.6
Norwegian	601	3.7	725	6.3
Swedish	348	2.9	452	3.9
Italian	268	1.6	502	4.3
Polish	332	2.0	283	2.5
Scottish	348	2.1	317	2.7
Swiss	568	0.8	110	1.0
Dutch	785	1.1	205	1.8
French	1,854	2.6	578	5.0

Sources: https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Aberdeen/Ancestry, https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Washington/Enumclaw/Ancestry.

Poles did not dominate in any of the four cities (Tables 4 and 6). Nevertheless, as the following sections demonstrate, they were influential enough to build their ethnic communities. They began by establishing local chapters of the Polish National Alliance, a national mutual aid association based in Chicago. In the process, as new PNA lodges were established in other locations, their members reached out to Poles throughout the region; they also established and strengthened relations with major centers of the Polish diaspora in the U.S. However, while these efforts fostered bonding social capital within the Polish community at local, regional and national levels, they also created barriers between Poles and non-Poles. Nevertheless, in terms of social practices, in daily life, work and public spaces, Poles interacted and cooperated with other local immigrant groups. In religious matters, they formed closer relationships with fellow Catholic immigrants. Another common ground for all immigrants was the working-class movements in Wilkeson and Aberdeen, although such movements were absent in Pe Ell, a small town, and Enumclaw, with its rural economy.

4. Polish National Alliance

In the majority of Polish communities in the U.S., immigrants began organizing through ethnic parishes, while in the Pacific Northwest, their initial ethnic structures centered around the Polish National Alliance (PNA). The PNA is a secular association founded in 1880. It competed from the outset with the Polish Roman Catholic Association (PRCU), which claims its founding date as 1874.[13] Both organizations have grown into nationwide mutual-aid and insurance companies in the U.S., and both are headquartered in Chicago. The PNA's presence in the Pacific Northwest reflects the close relationship between local Poles and their compatriots in the Midwest. It also shows that the secular society has become more appealing to local Poles than the PRCU, which has no presence in the Pacific Northwest.

The first PNA lodge in Washington State was founded in 1890 in Tacoma, and it was called Morning Star in the West. "A total of 17 PNA lodges were established in the region by 1921." (Hicker). Four of them were launched in the towns under study, with the Wilkeson lodge being chronologically the first. In 1899, lodge #480, Kosciuszko in the West, opened in Wilkeson, and it was the second PNA unit in the Pacific Northwest. The geographic proximity to Tacoma may have made it easier for Wilkeson Poles to establish their own PNA lodge.

In 1903, Poles in Enumclaw founded PNA lodge #616, Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 1907, in Aberdeen, the PNA lodge #852, Kosciuszko and Pulaski, was established. In 1912, Poles from Pe Ell opened lodge #1526, Kosciuszko (Hicker). Today, only the Aberdeen PNA lodge remains active, having absorbed the Pe Ell PNA lodge in 1985, while the lodges in Wilkeson and Enumclaw merged with Tacoma in 1958.

Despite the secular nature of the PNA, the Enumclaw lodge adopted a religious name, as did the lodge in Tacoma. However, patriotic names such as those honoring America's Polish heroes, Kosciuszko and Pulaski, became more common. Additionally, by choosing names for their lodges (Kosciuszko in the West, Morning Star in the West), several Polish communities expressed their pride in their residence in the Pacific Northwest, a very remote region. In other words, the immigrants had a sense of agency and demonstrated it in their relationship with the larger and more established centers of the American Polish community.

In a way, the process of ethnic community-building fostered both bonding social capital, which strengthened the group's internal cohesion, and bridging social capital, which extended across ethnic boundaries. The PNA Lodge in Seattle (established in 1899) was called "Unity of Poles and Lithuanians in the West" by its leaders, reflecting a broad understanding of the term "Polish" within the Polish National Alliance, encompassing those living in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This example illustrates how former neighbors not only migrated to the same place

[13] Timothy L. Smith described immigrant Catholic societies (PRCU among them) in the following way: "These Catholic societies (…) defined their purposes in specifically religious terms, restricted their membership to practicing communicants, and spent a substantial portion of their money and energies in promoting their faith." (Timothy L. Smith. "Lay Initiative in the Religious Life of American Immigrants, 1880-1950." *Anonymous Americans: Explorations in Nineteenth-Century Social History*, edited by Tamara K. Hareven, Englewood Cliffs, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1971, p. 238).

but also maintained contact and cooperated with one another, continuing common social practices.[14] Another example of close cooperation can be seen between Poles and Slovaks in Wilkson.

The PNA lodges opened their halls in Wilkeson and Pe Ell. In Aberdeen, immigrants founded the independent Polish Club. Poles in Enumclaw, however, did not have their own ethnic hall. The halls in Pe Ell and Wilkeson were small, reflecting the size of the local Polish communities. Nevertheless, the Polish Hall in Pe Ell had a kitchen, dining rooms and a dance floor (Hicker). The Polish Hall in Wilkeson "was only the size of a small house, unsuitable for larger community events. Next door was the much larger Slovak Hall which served as a meeting place used by various ethnic and labor groups in Wilkeson. Dances held there in the early 20th-century attracted a diverse crowd representing the various ethnic groups of the community, Poles included" (Hicker). This quote highlights how PNA activities both reinforced ethnic boundaries and bridged them. In other words, social practices included close contacts with other local immigrant groups. In Wilkeson, these included former neighbors, such as Slovaks, Czechs, and Ukrainians, as well as other groups, such as Croatians, Italians and Finns (Alter).

While these two halls no longer exist, the former Wilkeson hall building can still be identified.[15] Poles in Aberdeen founded a spacious hall (after reconstruction, it is a two-story building), which still operates today as the Polish Club. Its primary role was to provide a space for meetings of ethnic associations, choirs, and youth groups. Occasionally, "children performed stage plays (…) in the Polish language, of course" ("Polish Club: Eighty Years of History on Grays Harbor").

Although the venue was not owned by the PNA, Aberdeen PNA lodge meetings were held there. According to local Polish American collective memory, the club's origins date back to 1913 when immigrants began holding informal Sunday meetings in a private residence. They soon decided to establish the Polish Independent Political Club and to construct a hall ("Polish Club: Eighty Years of History on Grays Harbor").[16] "After completion, the building was dedicated with ceremonies by Father Brzoska, parish priest of the Polish Church of St. Peter and Paul." Despite its close ties to the parish, the history of the Polish Club was closely linked with organized labor; powerful unions met there for several decades, including the Airplane & Piano Parts Workers' Union, the Playwood Workers, the Machinists' Union, the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers, and the Culinary Alliance & Bartenders' Union (Norkoski 13). Polish immigrants belonged to these unions, forging ties that crossed ethnic boundaries at the local level and included various groups. In addition, "virtually all major state Democratic officials have found their way to

[14] Another example of close relations between Poles and Lithuanians can be found in Roslyn, WA, where the two groups, along with other immigrants, established a common cemetery https://mtsgreenway.org/blog/roslyn-cemetery/, https://www.interment.net/data/us/wa/kittitas/polish-cemetery/index.htm.

[15] As noticed and demonstrated by Robert Hicker during a field trip in June 2022.

[16] The article gives the names of Poles who signed the original charter: John Wolkowicz, John Sliwa, Frank Dombroski, Joe Walczak, John Milkowski, John Palewicz, John Wojs, Stanley Lesnok, John Lesniak, Andrzej Rzetolny, Joe Malik. "One of the biggest loan came from Mr. Wolkowich, the first president of the Polish Club (…)." The construction was supervised by Bob Mincewicz (Polish Club: 5-6).

the Polish Club at one time or another (…)."[17] The Polish Club is still in operation today, but the neighborhood is gradually deteriorating, raising serious concerns in recent decades.

The establishment of ethnic halls signaled that immigrants had achieved a degree of financial stability that enabled them to build the material foundations of the community. Indeed, the halls became centers of local life, hosting weddings and weekly dances attended by the entire community. They also typically housed a Polish language school and hosted patriotic ceremonies.

Local PNA lodges worked together under a regional entity – PNA Council 57 – which considered the Polish Hall in Tacoma (PNA Lodge #156) its home base (Hicker). According to Council records, all four lodges were active, paying dues and sending delegates to Council meetings, which were held twice a year. This indicates regular cooperation between local Polish communities, despite the considerable distances that separated them. It also demonstrates a high level of organizational efficiency.

The author of an article in a local newspaper on the history of the Polish parish in Pe Ell noted that "the Polish community was based on three factors giving the Polish immigrant worker and his family a sense of stability and home in new surroundings:

- economic opportunity provided by the timber industry.
- social stability provided by the Polish National Alliance, a fraternal organization, which maintained a social hall in Pe Ell for its members and friends.
- the church, which gave the immigrant a sense of spiritual stability and continuity since they could worship according to familiar traditions and in Polish language." ("Renewing a Tradition…").

In the quoted statement, it is the PNA, a secular association, that takes precedence over the Church. Moreover, the Church in question is not the Roman Catholic Church but the Polish National Catholic Church, a schismatic body not recognized by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. However, most Polish immigrants in the U.S., including those in the Pacific Northwest, were Roman Catholics.

5. The Church

Yang and Ebaugh asserted that: "Historically, religious institutions were among the most important resources that immigrant groups used to reproduce their ethno-religious identity in a new surrounding and to help them adjust to the challenges of surviving in a demanding and often threating environment." (Yang and Ebaugh 269). As already mentioned, this pattern, typical for most white ethnic groups in the U.S., also applied to major Polish communities across the country[18] but not to Polish communities in the Pacific Northwest. Secular associations became the first Polish entities in the region, taking precedence over religious structures. Moreover, in most cases, Poles had to cooperate with neighbors representing other

[17] Democrats call the hall home (Polish Club: 13).

[18] "Parish parishes were a physical center and a spiritual fulcrum for Polish communities that anchored immigrants to their new homes in Illinois," (John Radzilowski. "Poles in Illinois: A Brief Historical Outline." *Studia Polonijne*, vol. 43, 2022, p. 97).

ethnic groups to establish a church. In other words, when introducing religious practices, they did not separate themselves from Catholics of other ethnic groups, although they did try to ensure that services, including sermons, hymns, and confessions, were held in Polish on a fairly regular basis. They shared church space (church buildings, parochial houses) with their neighbors, attended English or German language services when a Polish priest was unavailable, and sometimes organized church celebrations with non-Polish parishioners. However, in two instances, Polish immigrants chose to establish parishes of the schismatic Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC), which clearly separated them from non-Polish Catholics. This topic will be briefly discussed at the end of this chapter.

Generally, Polish immigrants organized pastoral care in all four surveyed towns, establishing parishes in three and a Catholic mission in one (Wilkeson). In Pe Ell, alongside the Roman Catholic parish, the local Poles founded a parish of the schismatic Church, leaving local immigrants with two parishes to choose from. Currently, only the parish in Enumclaw remains active, while the other four units (three Roman Catholic, and one PNCC) disbanded as the immigrant families who supported them moved out of their old neighborhoods.

It is worth outlining the history of the churches that served Polish immigrants in these four towns. In 1892, two years after the founding of the first local PNA lodge, Poles began efforts to launch churches in Tacoma and the smaller towns of Pe Ell and Wilkeson. In Tacoma, despite the large size of the local Polish American community, the process was complicated and it took about two decades before the parish achieved stability. In the *Hoffmann's Catholic Directory, Almanac and Clergy List* for 1894, "Polish missions" (and not a parish) are listed in Tacoma as served by Rev. M. Fafara. This entry likely refers to several locations; however, Wilkson is listed separately as being "served from Tacoma," while Pe Ell is not listed at all (*Hoffmann's Catholic Directory…* 407). Rev. Michal Fafara (1862-1914) born in Austrian Poland near Krakow, a Polish priest recently ordained in Rome, was appointed to care for Slavic people in the state of Washington (Hicker). He resided in St. Joseph's Hospital in Tacoma, and from there he performed his missionary duties in the small towns across the state (*Hoffmann's Catholic Directory…* 407). It is worth noting that Fafara also occasionally served Native Americans who had converted to Christianity/Catholicism.

The Polish church in Tacoma relocated within the city and changed its name from Our Lady of Czestochowa to St. Stanislaus Kostka, and eventually to SS. Peter and Paul, and "even the center of the Polish Mission shifted from Tacoma to Enumclaw, and back to Tacoma again" (Hicker). This is mentioned here because, in the long run, the Polish-American parish in Tacoma has been involved in the majority of efforts providing Polish-language pastoral care throughout the region, including in Pe Ell, Wilkeson and Enumclaw – but not in Aberdeen.

With other parishes established as a joint effort between Poles and other immigrant groups, the Tacoma congregation became the only Polish church (not multi-ethnic) in the Pacific Northwest from the 1920s until the late 1980s, when a Polish parish opened in Seattle.

However, being founded and managed by Polish immigrants, the parish welcomed non-Polish members; for example, several Lithuanian Catholic families were part of the congregation, and Ruthenians occasionally attended services. Moreover, there were connections with a German Catholic group. In *The Catholic Directory,*

Almanac and Clergy List of 1930, SS. Peter and Paul of Tacoma is listed as a Polish parish, "attended from St. Martin's Abbey, Lacey, Washington" (610). It should be explained that St. Martin's was a Benedictine Abbey founded in Lacey, Washington by German American Benedictine Monks. Its theological seminary attracted Polish men aspiring to the priesthood, some of whom joined the Benedictine Order and ministered to Polish immigrants in the region.

In 1892, Poles, together with the Swiss, managed to establish the Catholic Church of St. Joseph in Pe Ell (Holden Givens). Other sources point to the involvement of at least one more group in the venture – German Catholics from Romania. It seems that Poles constituted the majority of the local congregation. A key role was played by Fr. Michal Fafara, who served the Pe Ell church from its inception in 1892 to 1903 (Hicker). *Hoffmann's Catholic Directory…* records for the Pe Ell church are inconsistent. In 1896, the "Pi El (church)" is listed as a mission served by Rev. Fafara from Tacoma, and in the 1897 volume, the Pe Ell church is noted as an independent unit, served by Rev. M. Fafara, and operating missions (among other places) in "Ballard, King Co. (Poles)" and Wilkeson (*Hoffmann's Catholic Directory…* 1896: 399-400 and 1897: 359). After Rev. Fafara left for Enumclaw, it was difficult to secure a Polish speaking priest for the local congregation, so the diocese invited the Salvatorians to assist. This German-based order, founded in 1892, had a community in Krakow, Poland since 1902. The Poles in the Pacific Northwest were to be served by Rev. Jurek, and Rev. Kornke, both Germans and fluent in Polish, and Rev. Wojciechowski, who was Polish. "In Pe Ell, they built a Salvatorian House and a larger parish church in 1903" (Hicker). The task assigned by the diocese to serve the growing number of scattered communities of different ethnic backgrounds proved daunting, leading to the Salvatorians' departure. Rev. Wojciechowski temporarily left the order and returned to Europe, Rev. Kornke was transferred to Roslyn, Washington, and Rev. Jurek moved to California. After several years (1904-1907) under Rev. Organisciak, the Pe Ell parish was led by Rev. Zdzislaus Rozanski between 1908 and 1912 (Hicker). In 1912, Rev. Michael Pawlowski, a Benedictine from the Lacey Abbey was appointed rector in Pe Ell, but soon the diocese decided that Rev. Organisciak should replace him. These changes, coupled with a dispute over church property ownership, led to a split in 1916, with a large group leaving St. Joseph's Church to establish an independent parish of the Polish National Roman Catholic Church. As already mentioned, this story will be elaborated on later in this section.

The briefly presented experiences in Tacoma and Pe Ell demonstrate that when a group of Polish Catholics was too small to establish a parish, the solution was to establish a church mission or church station, visited by priests from larger local parishes. Sometimes, a church or a chapel held the status of a mission or station before it was elevated to a full parish. This was a case in Pe Ell, where St. Joseph's Church became a full parish within a few years.

In the 1895 *Hoffmann's Catholic Directory…*, Wilkeson is mentioned as a station served by Rev. M. Fafara from Tacoma (409). According to an outline of the Wilkeson church: "[in 1892 – DP] After repeated requests to Bishop (…)[19] for a priest who

[19] "Egidins Junger, Bishop of Nesqually then residing in Vancouver, Wash." Brief History of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Wilkeson, Washington," typed report dated 1964, Archdiocese of Seattle Archive. The local diocese, established in 1850 as the Diocese of Nesqually and

could speak their language, the Bishop finally succeeded in obtaining Rev. M. Fafara (…). He said Mass once a month in an old schoolhouse (the present site is the Wilkeson School gym) in what was then called the uptown district" (*Brief History of Our Lady*…). The construction of the church of Our Lady of Lourdes was initiated in Wilkeson in 1893 by John Taszarski and completed in 1894 (*Brief History of Our Lady*…). It became a mission church, serving local Catholics of mainly Polish, German, Irish and Slovak descent, while Rusyns founded the Orthodox Holy Trinity Temple in 1896 and constructed the church in 1900.[20] The Orthodox church was attended by Rusyns, Greeks, Serbs, and Russians (Alter). Between 1913 and 1918, Rev. Z. Rozanski led Our Lady of Lourdes Church, followed by Rev. Organisciak.[21] Later, the Benedictines took over the church's care. In 1921, Abbot Oswald Baran, OSB, appointed Rev. Henry Rozycki (Ruzicki), who "remained in charge until 1924. Mass was said but once a month" (*Brief History of Our Lady*…). Rev. Lawrence Piotrzkowski led the congregation from 1924 to 1920, and again from 1934 to 1945.

The origins of Sacred Heart of Jesus parish in Enumclaw date back to 1887/89. In those years, the first church was built, only to be destroyed by fire in 1911.[22] In 1898, Rev. M. Fafara arrived and became pastor, making the church the parish center. From there, Fafara began to "attend Poles in Seattle and other places" (*Souvenir from Sacred Heart Church*…). Interestingly, in 1907, his sister Maryanna Twardowski joined him in the U.S. with her two sons, while her husband Andrew had arrived two years earlier. The family had a small farm near Enumclaw.[23] Rev. Fafara stayed in Enumclaw until 1908, and from 1909 to 1912 Rev. A. Mlinar was in charge. In 1911-1912, the second church was built "under the supervision of the Polish people of the community" (Stanley Krulikowski, chairman; Tom Muchlinski, Mrs. Lou Murkowski), and "by the labor and the donations of all the citizens of this area." It had seating for 250 people (Farrelly). Other sources credit Fafara, Rozanski, and Tscholl for the new church building.[24] In 1913, the parish was led by Rev. L. Rozanski, while later pastors (E.T. McCarthy, J. Tscholl, O'Rafferty, O'Hagan, Farrelly) were not of Polish ancestry (Farrelly).

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based in Vancouver, WA, was relocated to Seattle in 1896. In 1907, it was renamed to reflect its principal city, and in 1951, it was elevated to an archdiocese. "The History of the Archdiocese of Seattle." *Archdiocese of Seattle*, https://archseattle.org/history-of-the-archdiocese-of-seattle/.

[20] Both churches are small but architecturally distinctive and have become significant landmarks in Wilkeson. The Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Tacoma, Washington (Holy Resurrection – Holy Trinity church, Tacoma – Wilkeson Washington: "Our Parish History." *Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church*, https://www.orthodoxtacoma.com/history.

[21] It is notable that Rev. Z. Rozanski served as a pastor at St. Joseph Slovak parish in Tacoma (*Brief History of Our Lady*…).

[22] Initially it was a mission church attended by priests from the Indian Mission in Blanchet (1889-90), then from Seattle (1891), and later from Puyallup (1892-97) (Farrelly).

[23] Rev. Fafara and his sister are buried at the cemetery in Enumclaw, which was established during his tenure as pastor of the Sacred Heart parish.

[24] "1898's – Fr. Fafara was made a resident pastor of Enumclaw. Here he built a church and rectory, and from here he conducted his missionary visits by means of a horse and buggy." (*Brief History of Our Lady*…). According to the parish jubilee brochure, however, the rectory was built by Rev. J.F. McCarthy (Farrelly; *Souvenir from Sacred Heart Church*…).

Regarding the ethnicity of the parishioners, "The original Catholic population was predominantly Irish. In the later years they were supplanted by the Polish nationality. Today [1942 – DP] the majority of our people are of Austrian extraction. The people number about six percent of the population" (Farrelly). Additional ethnic groups among the parishioners included Slovaks and Croatians. In 1973, the parish relocated, "but brought along the steeple from the old church as a memorial to our history and to the faith of those who came before us" ("Parish History").

The parish cooperated with Catholics in Krain, Washington, where many Slovenes from Krajina in Austria-Hungary had settled, establishing a church mission in 1887. Today, there are many Hispanic parishioners and several masses are conducted in Spanish. However, "Settled by Eastern European Catholics, Sacred Heart continued many of their strong traditions & devotions. Even now, more than a hundred years later, one old world tradition still survives: every year on November 1st, the Feast of All Saints, candles are lit on all the graves in the old Holy Family Cemetery at Krain and the rosary is said as darkness falls" ("Parish History").

In Aberdeen, Polish immigrants established the SS. Peter and Paul parish in 1906/07. In the Catholic Directory of 1906, and 1907 it is not listed, but appears in 1910 as SS. Peter and Paul (Italian and Polish) with Rev. C. Brzoska (*The Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List…* 621-623). A note in local newspaper provides additional details about the church's beginnings (Gatlin 12).

A committee that was to found Polish Catholic congregation met for the first time in 1906 and it was chaired by Rev. Constantine Brzoska. The Polish names of the committee members included Zelasko, Zymon, Narbutt, Dembierz, Sobolewski and Yucha. Nineteen families gathered initially $415, but eventually they manage to purchase an old Presbyterian church building for $2,200. They successfully moved it ("by log sled down the elevated plank streets") to a lot next to the Polish Hall (Gatlin 12). By the 1990s, it became difficult to secure a priest for the parish, and an agreement with the Society of Christ for Polish Migrants was reached in 1995-96. This Polish-based order now manages the only two Polish parishes in the state, in Tacoma and Seattle. In Aberdeen, regular weekend services in SS. Peter and Paul were discontinued, with parishioners likely attending services at nearby St. Mary's Church.

To sum up the section on securing Polish pastoral care in the Pacific Northwest, let us examine the data provided for the surveyed towns by *The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1910*. It lists the following (in alphabetical order):

- Aberdeen (…) "St. Peter and Paul (Italian and Polish), Rev. C. Brzoska";
- Enumclaw – Sacred Heart of Jesus, Rev. Al. Mlinar;
- Pe Ell, St. Joseph's, Rev. Z. Rozanski;
- Tacoma, St. Stanislaus, Rev. M. Fafara: Mission – Wilkeson, Our Lady of Lourdes

The three priests were Poles, indicating that Polish immigrants in this remote region succeeded in finding Polish religious leaders and providing religious practices in their mother tongue. Rev. Mlinar, likely a Slovak, also served as pastor of St. Joseph Slovak parish in Tacoma for some time.

The Official Catholic Directory Anno Domini 1934 lists the following entities in the four surveyed towns, with two Polish priests (671-674).

- Aberdeen, Grays Harbor, SS. Peter and Paul (Polish), Rev. C. Brzoska, Cath. pop. 250,
- Enumclaw, King Co., Sacred Heart of Jesus,

- Pe Ell, Lewis Co., St. Joseph's, Rev. James Toner (LB 128), Cath. pop. – 96,
- Wilkeson, Our Lady of Lourdes, Cath. pop. – 90, attended from St. Martin's College, Lacey, Wash. – Rev. Lawrence Piotrzkowski, OSB.

Additionally, the institutions in charge of religious communities include St. Martin's College in Lacey (St. Martin's Abbey), with two teachers who were Polish: Rev. Lawrence Piotrzkowski, OSB, and Henry Rozycki, OSB (Dean of the College). As mentioned earlier, both served in Polish congregations.

Regarding the ties across ethnic boundaries, *The Catholic Directory…* notes that the parish in Aberdeen was Polish and Italian. Other sources indicate that the parish in Pe Ell was founded by Polish and Swiss immigrants, with more detailed studies showing that Poles initially prayed together with German Catholics in Pe Ell. We also know that the mission in Wilkeson was shared by all local Roman Catholic immigrants, and that many priests who served Polish immigrants were trained at the (German-American) Benedictine Seminar in Lacey, WA. These examples demonstrate the high level of cooperation between ethnic groups within the local congregation of the Roman Catholic Church.

The dominance of Irish bishops at the national level in the church hierarchy and their rivalry between themselves and with German bishops did not appear to impact the Pacific Northwest. Moreover, local bishops likely did not exert as much assimilation pressure on immigrant Catholics. This very pressure was one of two main reasons for the schism in the Polish Catholic community, with the second reason being a dispute over parish property, which was to be ceded to the diocese.

The Polish National Catholic Church that split from the Roman Catholic Church in 1897 after several years of severe disputes, established its headquarters in Scranton, Pennsylvania, on the opposite coast of the continent (Smith 230-232, 239).[25] It broke ties with the Holy See in the Vatican and, between 1907 and 2006, was part of the Union of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Churches. In 2006, it entered into a limited communion agreement with Rome.

In the Pacific Northwest, there was a brief effort to introduce the PNCC in Tacoma, but it was more successful in Pe Ell, where the Holy Cross parish of the PNCC was established in 1916, attracting 200 families ("Renewing a Tradition…"). Its first pastor was Rev. Peter Parzychowski (1916-18), followed by Rev. Joseph Foltynski (1918-21), both of whom were "independent missionaries," meaning they were not formally ordained (Hicker). "Overall, the split of the parish did not create a deep division in other areas the Polish community. Poles from both churches gathered and socialized at the Polish Hall, held membership in an active local PNA lodge, and worked side by side in the local sawmills" (Hicker). The new parish established a cemetery in Pe Ell, adjacent to the cemetery of St. Joseph parish of the Roman Catholic Church. The congregation remained active until 1950s but began to decline in the 1960s. "Between 1953 and 1979, Holy Cross was served by Episcopalian priests

[25] The Diocese of Utrecht separated from the Catholic Church in 1703, and it ordained independent bishops. In 1870, it was joined by several groups of German Catholics following the proclamation of the dogma of papal infallibility (McNamara). The PNCC maintained close relations with the Episcopal Church and the Old Catholics. However, these relationships began to weaken in the late 1970s as the PNCC gradually moved toward reuniting with the Roman Catholic Church. In 2006, the PNCC entered into a limited communion agreement with Rome.

from Chehalis and then until 1985 by Old Catholic priests from the Portland area" ("Renewing a Tradition…"). A Pe Ell couple born into Polish families, members of the Holy Cross parish, recalled that their wedding in the late 1960s was the last Polish ceremony held in the church.[26]

6. Labor Market and Working-Class Activity

An important aspect of immigrant social practices is labor market relations and involvement in working-class activities, such as trade unions. This topic deserves an in-depth analysis and a separate study. Some fragmentary information about the connections of the Polish Club in Aberdeen to local working-class structures has been mentioned above. In Aberdeen, most Polish immigrants were employed in the timber industry and sought to define and defend their rights in the hazardous work of logging and sawmills. Pe Ell, despite its timber-based economy, was probably too sustain such organized activity. In Enumclaw, an agricultural hub, organizing and coordinating such efforts would have been particularly challenging.

In Wilkeson, however, the situation was different and had already drawn academic interest. A study devoted to the multi-ethnic working-class population of Wilkeson was published in the "Journal of American Ethnic History" by Peter Alter, who paid attention to the activities of Polish immigrants. Alter noted that at the turn of the 20th century, "roughly half of [Wilkeson] residents emigrated (…) from modern day Croatia, Slovakia, western Ukraine, Poland, Italy, Finland and the Czech Republic." Among them, he mentioned Andrew Biesiadzki, who immigrated from Austrian Poland, initially settled in Michigan, and eventually found employment in Wilkeson coal mines (Alter 4).

Alter emphasized the inter-ethnic cooperation in Wilkenson and concluded that "the town's immigrants creatively and effectively reached beyond class, local, and national boundaries to <invent> and develop a common ethnicity particular to the Carbon River Carbon River ethnicity."[27] Thus, he employed the concept of the invention of ethnicity that helps interpret the social practices and cultural changes within the local immigrant communities (Neils Conzen et al.)

Alter examined records of the United Mine Workers (UMW) local union #2634, which had 200-250 members and successfully elected their own officers. "These miners publicly expressed this multi-ethnic loyalty of workers in yearly Labor Day and Eight Hour Day parades down Wilkeson's main street. (…) In 1915, the immigrant miners of #2634 used this multi-ethnic solidarity to found the Wilkeson Co-Operative Association, a general store which supplied miners and their families with everyday goods. By owning a general store, Wilkeson miners controlled the prices of essential food stuffs and created an alternative to the company store" (Alter 12).

Alter's study also covered a wide range of ethnic activities, including: stores owned by immigrants, ethnic halls (Finnish Socialist Hall), local immigrant

[26] An interview conducted in Pe Ell in July 2022.

[27] It is worth noting that a study devoted to the mining history in Pierce County, where Wilkeson is located, makes no mention of the ethnicity of the workers (Daniels).

associations like the Croatian *Sokol*, and immigrant churches (Catholic – Our Lady of Lourdes, and Orthodox – Holy Trinity). He observed that the Croatian *Sokol*, and Polish and Slovak lodges marched together alongside UMW #2634 in local parades.

7. Conclusion

Peter Alter argued that small towns have often been overlooked by scholars. Indeed, most studies on immigrant activity focus on very large cities such as Chicago, or fairly large ones like Detroit or Buffalo. This study, in contrast, is devoted to small and very small towns. It turns out that there is a plethora of ethnic activities in such places, which makes it difficult to cover their variety in a single paper. The choice has been made to emphasize secular associations and church congregations, while only briefly touching upon the working class-movement.

It is worthy to note the ties between all forms of immigrant social practices, including the occasional mutual support between trade unions and several church groups. The working-class movement served as common ground for all local immigrant communities. For example, Rev. Fafara was a member of the PNA lodge and did not discourage immigrants from joining labor unions. In general, priests and lay leaders promoted educational and cultural activities and established mutual benefit and savings and loan societies. "American Roman Catholics of Polish, Lithuanian, Croatian, and Hungarian backgrounds fashioned similar national societies, drawing in many cases upon the example set up earlier by Czech and German Catholics" (Smith 238). Despite this observation made by a well-known historian, the process by which immigrant groups adapted the patterns developed by earlier arrivals is usually overlooked by researchers.

In comparison to large Polish American centers in the U.S., Poles in the Pacific Northwest did not develop a strong network of Catholic congregations and did not transplant the Polish Roman Catholic Union to the region. Moreover, despite directives from the American Roman Catholic Church, Poles did not establish any parochial school in the region. This does not indicate strong skepticism toward the Roman Catholic Church, as efforts to establish units of the Polish National Catholic Church were short-lived. Clearly, Poles did not copy the ethnic patterns developed in the Midwest or on the East Coast, they rather transformed their social practices and reoriented their goals. In other words, they developed strategies that proved effective in their new environment. For example, they organized Polish language classes in connection with Polish halls or Polish congregations

Currently, the two main centers of Polish activity in the Pacific Northwest – Seattle and Tacoma – extend their influence to smaller immigrant communities that include Pe Ell, Wilkeson, Aberdeen and Enumclaw. Many Poles and descendants of Polish immigrants living in these cities attend the Seattle Polish Festival and occasionally visit Polish delicatessens in Seattle.

Polish American communities in the Pacific Northwest have established connections with the Polish Home (ethnic activity center) in Seattle, as well as with each other. Nevertheless, local Polish immigrants shaped their agenda in daily activities in accordance with local conditions. They did not allow social disorganization despite struggling with cultural shock. Instead, they mobilized to build a cohesive

immigrant community, and by confronting the new environment, they managed to reorganize their social ties, generate new social capital, and develop new strategies.

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